United Nations A/69/PV.102

General Assembly
Sixty-ninth session

Official Records

102nd plenary meeting
Thursday, 10 September 2015, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kutesa ..... (Uganda)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 32 (*continued*)

Prevention of armed conflict

Draft resolution (A/69/L.74/Rev.1)

The President: Members will recall that, under agenda item 32, the General Assembly adopted resolution 69/285, at its 92nd plenary meeting, on 3 June 2015, and adopted resolution 69/293, at its 96th plenary meeting, on 19 June 2015.

I now give the floor to the representative of Nigeria to introduce draft resolution A/69/L.74/Rev.1.

Mr. Elias-Fatile (Nigeria): As the facilitator of the negotiations process on draft resolution A/69/L.74/Rev.1, entitled "Commemoration of the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations", Nigeria has the pleasure to introduce, on behalf of the Group of African States, the draft text in this meeting. I would like to begin by underlining the obvious fact that this is the only Member-State-driven initiative to commemorate the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations, and to request the Assembly's support for the draft resolution's adoption. It will be to the credit of all Member States that we all agree to commemorate the seventieth anniversary of the Organization, which belongs to everyone, through a Member States-driven initiative, as represented by this draft resolution.

This is a very important text, and sufficient time was spent negotiating it before we were able to have what is before us this afternoon. Kindly permit me to provide, in two minutes, some background information for the benefit of some members that could not participate in the informal consultations where we negotiated the text.

As of April, it was obvious to the African Group that there was no plan in place by the General Assembly to commemorate the seventieth anniversary of the signing of the Charter that established the United Nations. Consequently, the African States reflected on this and engaged in consultations, conscious of the need to seize the opportunity of the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations to take stock of the achievements and challenges of the Organization after 70 years of its existence. Against that backdrop, African Permanent Representatives mandated their experts to explore the possibility of developing a draft text with a feasible proposal that would be acceptable to all on the need to celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the Organization.

Prior to the commencement of efforts, discussions, and eventually negotiations, among African Group experts on the draft resolution, we conducted some research to see if there were any ongoing discussions on the same subject at the United Nations. That became necessary to avoid the duplication of effort and for other germane reasons. Following our inquiry, we were satisfied that there were no similar ongoing initiatives at the United Nations.

Eventually, we arrived at a text that was presented to Member States for their consideration at our first informal meeting on Thursday, 10 June. The draft text

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before the Assembly for consideration this afternoon is a product of compromise, deep reflection and far-reaching consultations. It takes on board a number of considerations, including, first, a realization of the importance of marking the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations in a significant way.

Secondly, as we mark the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations, it was considered very important to reflect on and take account of the issue of the maintenance of international peace and security — the very reason for the establishment of the Organization, in 1945. That is an important issue to Africa.

Thirdly, the seventieth anniversary is an ideal milestone by which to reflect on what has been achieved, especially in the area of the maintenance of international peace and security, which is a fundamental concern to us in Africa.

Fourthly, it should be recalled that the series of United Nations meetings already scheduled for the high-level segment of the seventieth session of the General Assembly will focus on the issue of development, while none of the meetings will focus on the subject of international peace and security.

Fifthly, this also buttresses the need for the theme of the thematic debate to focus on the subject of the maintenance of international peace and security by creating a platform to discuss it extensively at the highest level possible during the high-level segment of the seventieth session of the General Assembly.

Lastly, from the beginning of the discussions on the draft resolution, the African Group continually highlighted the need to avoid a draft resolution that would involve any financial implications. It is delightful to note that the draft before us will have no financial implications, as we were informed and as will be announced again this afternoon.

We are grateful to Member States for the large turnout at the informal meetings in June and July, and we appreciate the overwhelming support that we received from delegations. It is remarkable that there were about 80 delegations at the very first informal consultations. The initial discussions went very smoothly, with many delegations supporting Africa and commending this initiative. The African Group appreciates the observations, the suggestions, the different views that were advanced and, indeed, the invaluable contributions made during the informal consultations.

It is equally instructive to add that the programme budget implications associated with the draft resolution were a major area of concern, on which there were strong reservations by four delegations. It will be recalled that the preambular and all operative paragraphs, including the paragraph that contains information with indications that the draft resolution would involve some financial implications in the beginning, were agreed as a result of this. However, today, as I said, it is noteworthy and encouraging to know that this concern is no longer relevant, as the Secretariat has clearly confirmed that a budget officer has indicated that the draft resolution will not involve any financial implications.

In conclusion, on behalf of the African States, I wish to state again that this is the only Member States-driven initiative to commemorate the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations after a series of negotiations, consultations and discussions, including the compromise that went into it. We request delegations' cooperation and support to adopt the draft text this afternoon for implementation. We encourage delegations to participate at the highest possible level in the thematic debate.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/69/L.74/Rev.1, entitled "Commemoration of the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations".

I now give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Zhang Saijin (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution and in addition to those delegations listed in the document, the following countries have also become sponsors of draft resolution A/69/L.74/Rev.1: Belarus, Georgia, India, Indonesia, Italy, Jordan, Norway, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia and Sweden.

The President: May I take it that the General Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/69/L.74/Rev.1?

Draft resolution A/69/L.74/Rev.1 was adopted (resolution 69/316).

The President: Before giving the floor to the speaker in explanation of position, may I remind

delegations that explanations are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I now give the floor to the representative of India.

Mr. Mukerji (India): I would like to begin by commending my colleagues from the African Union for this extremely timely initiative and for moving resolution 69/316 for the consideration of the General Assembly. As a sponsor of this resolution, my delegation fully supports the need to commemorate the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations through this proposed meeting of the General Assembly at the highest possible levels during the week of the high-level segment of the General Assembly.

It was on 16 April 2013 that my delegation first proposed that we commemorate the importance of the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations. I am therefore very happy that, with our brothers and sisters in Africa, we have today given concrete shape to this idea whose time has come.

The debate of 1 and 2 October will provide a useful platform to look at the strengths and weaknesses of the United Nations system in addressing issues of peace and security and to consider pathways to meaningfully address its structural anomalies, including through the reform and expansion of the Security Council, the primary organ mandated by the Charter of the United Nations with responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. My delegation therefore looks forward avidly to participating in those deliberations.

I would like to conclude by complimenting the facilitator, the delegation of Nigeria, on its excellent stewardship of this process and for having followed a truly consultative, open and transparent approach in the negotiations leading up to the adoption of the resolution.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of position.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 32?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 123 (*continued*)

Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations

(t) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation

Draft resolution (A/69/L.79)

The President: The General Assembly will now take action on the draft resolution contained in document A/69/L.79.

Members will recall that the Assembly held its debate on agenda item 123 and its sub-items (a) to (y) at its 48th plenary meeting, on 11 November 2014.

I now give the floor to the representative of Kuwait to introduce draft resolution A/69/L.79.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait): In my capacity as Chair of the group of members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in New York, I am pleased to introduce draft resolution A/69/L.79, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation".

The aforementioned draft resolution is consistent with the spirit, mission and purposes of resolution 3369 (XXX), of 10 October 1975, whereby the Assembly decided to invite the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to participate in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly and of its subsidiary organs in the capacity of observer.

In its preambular paragraphs, the draft resolution reaffirms the shared common goals of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the United Nations in conflict prevention, confidence-building, peacekeeping, conflict resolution and post-conflict rehabilitation, mediation and preventive diplomacy, including conflict situations involving Muslim communities.

Furthermore, the draft resolution highlights the desire of the two organizations to work more closely in the political, economic, social, humanitarian, cultural and scientific fields and in their common search for solutions to global problems, such as questions relating to international peace and security, disarmament, self-determination, the promotion of a culture of peace through dialogue and cooperation, decolonization, fundamental human rights, economic and social development, and combating international terrorism. It welcomes the initiatives for interfaith dialogue by the

two organizations and the existing cooperation between the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

In its operative paragraphs, the draft resolution welcomes the strong commitment of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in the fight against violent extremism and terrorism; the shared common goals of the two organizations in promoting and facilitating the Middle East peace process; and the cooperation between the two organizations towards combating intolerance and the stigmatization of persons based on their religion or belief.

Four decades after the rightful and wise decision of the General Assembly, today we are witnessing the increasing importance and utility of dynamic cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. Clearly, in the face of enduring as well as emerging conflicts, such cooperation between the two organizations has a strategic value.

In conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity to express my deep gratitude for the diligent work undertaken by delegations in drafting this draft resolution.

I now request all States members of the General Assembly to adopt the draft resolution contained in document A/69/L.79 by consensus.

The President: I shall now call on those representatives who wish to explain their positions before the voting. May I remind delegations that explanations of position are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Bishnoi (India): Draft resolution A/69/L.79, on cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), which has been introduced, is a significant departure from previous resolutions on the subject, especially the one adopted by the General Assembly in August 2013, at its sixty-seventh session.

While previous resolutions envisaged the OIC as contributing to promoting and facilitating the Middle East peace process to achieve the objective of establishing a just and comprehensive peace in that region, operative paragraph 4 of the present draft resolution seeks to go beyond.

According to the draft resolution introduced today, the OIC would foster solutions to "other conflicts". The rationale for seeking to extend the role of the OIC in this manner is not clear. The OIC is also not a regional organization as understood in the context of Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter. We had constructively participated in the consultations on this text and conveyed our views in clear terms. However, these consultations were terminated abruptly, without resolving these issues and without coming to a common, mutually acceptable understanding.

While we do not ask for a vote, we would like to reiterate our position that the OIC has no locus standi for facilitating resolutions to any dispute outside the Middle East peace process or disputes that affect States that are non-members of the OIC.

Mr. Mnatsakanyan (Armenia): Armenia proudly shares a long history of friendship, cooperation, deep mutual respect and civilizational interaction with the overwhelming majority of States members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). With some of them, our common history stretches back many centuries. Armenia enjoys and will spare no effort to further deepen the most cordial bilateral relations with those States.

Furthermore, Armenia enjoys effective cooperation within the regional organizations of which it is a member and recognizes the value of regional arrangements in promoting peace, development and human rights. Within one such regional organization, namely, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Armenia is faithfully working towards the "pacific settlement of local disputes", as stipulated in Chapter VIII of the Charter.

Armenia has traditionally been involved in a most constructive manner in the negotiation and adoption of resolutions under the agenda item under consideration.

With respect to the present draft resolution, it should be understood that in negotiating draft resolutions on cooperation with the United Nations, the relevant organization deals with the broader membership of the United Nations, not all of which are members of the given organization and therefore are not bound by its mandate.

Achieving an explicit consensus while negotiating such resolutions is therefore most important, not least for the sake of the credibility of such resolutions.

Regrettably, this is not the case with the present draft. The OIC has no mandate to foster the resolution of disputes outside its mandated area. Operative paragraph 4 of the draft resolution in its present form therefore distorts basic principles of international law.

Armenia entered into the negotiations on the present draft in good faith and in a cooperative spirit. Armenia spared no effort in working to achieve a genuine consensus. In the course of negotiations, Armenia welcomed the position of the Chair to seek a consensus on each and every paragraph of the draft resolution or otherwise return to previous language. Notably, it was possible to secure consensus on most parts of the draft. At all stages of negotiations, Armenia tirelessly continued to seek a consensus on the language contained in operative paragraph 4. However, the negotiations have been frozen, no further consultations have been initiated and no efforts have been made to bridge the gaps. Such methods of negotiation have deprived this draft of genuine and full support. This is regrettable, as we were strongly committed to achieving consensual solutions, which, in our view, were perfectly possible.

While not asking for a vote, Armenia reiterates its position concerning paragraph 4, as the OIC has no mandate to foster the resolution of disputes outside its mandated area. Armenia calls upon the OIC to reiterate its support for internationally agreed formats of negotiations for the peaceful settlement of conflicts.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of position before adoption.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/69/L.79, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation".

I now give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Zhang Saijin (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of draft resolution A/69/L.79, in addition to those delegations listed in the document, the following countries have become sponsors: Georgia, Italy and Sweden.

The President: May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/69/L.79?

Draft resolution A/69/L.79 was adopted (resolution 69/317).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (t) of agenda item 123?

It was so decided.

(u) Cooperation between the United Nations and the Pacific Islands Forum

Draft resolution (A/69/L.90)

The President: The General Assembly will now take action on the draft resolution contained in document A/69/L.90.

Members will recall that the Assembly held its debate on agenda item 123 and its sub-items (a) to (y) at its 48th plenary meeting, on 11 November 2014.

I now give the floor to the representative of Papua New Guinea to introduce draft resolution A/69/L.90.

Mr. Sarufa (Papua New Guinea): Two days ago, Papua New Guinea assumed the Chair of the Pacific Islands Forum and, as my first assignment here in this context, I have the honour to introduce, on behalf of the members of the Pacific Islands Forum, draft resolution A/69/L.90, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Pacific Islands Forum". We are deeply pleased and grateful to all sponsors of this draft resolution. We also welcome and note with appreciation the increasing number of sponsors for this biennial draft resolution that we have observed since 2011, which stands as a testament to the increasing recognition of the expanding cooperative relations between the Pacific Islands Forum and the United Nations.

I would be remiss if I were not to acknowledge and commend the pivotal and strong leadership role and valued contribution made by the outgoing Pacific Islands Forum Chair, the Republic of Palau, in guiding the work of the Forum over the past year. I would also like to place on record our particular appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Caleb Otto, Permanent Representative of Palau to the United Nations, for not only spearheading the draft resolution that is now before the General Assembly, but also for his stewardship of the work of the Pacific Islands Forum by fostering constructive and cooperative relations between the Pacific Islands Forum and the United Nations.

As the incumbent Chair of the Pacific Islands Forum, Papua New Guinea pledges to strive to further consolidate the expanding and mutually beneficial

ties between the Forum and the United Nations as we embark on implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the other internationally agreed outcomes. In that regard, we welcome and look forward to the meeting between the Pacific Islands Forum leaders and the Secretary-General on the margins of the seventieth general debate of the General Assembly. I also applaud and thank the other members of the Forum and other States Members of the United Nations that played a role in the finalization of the draft resolution now under consideration.

As a brief overview, particularly for the States Members of the United Nations that are not familiar with the Pacific Islands Forum, the Forum was founded 44 years ago, in August 1971, as a regional intergovernmental organization where leaders would meet annually to develop collective responses to regional and international issues. It currently includes 16 independent and self-governing States in the Pacific region. It has three associate members, 12 observers and 17 post-Forum dialogue partners. The Pacific Islands Forum currently has observer status at the United Nations.

The Pacific Islands Forum's vision is one of ensuring a region of peace, harmony, security, social inclusion and prosperity, so that all peoples of the Pacific can lead free, healthy and productive lives. The profile and influence of the Forum has also developed significantly and matured; once a relatively informal meeting of leaders, it is now a major summit that attracts the attention and participation of many other nations and international and regional organizations, including the United Nations. Coincidentally, the forty-sixth Pacific Islands Forum is currently under way in Port Moresby, and concludes tomorrow.

The Forum's administrative arm is the Pacific Islands Forum secretariat, based in Suva. It acts as the secretariat for Forum-related events, implements decisions by leaders, facilitates the delivery of development assistance to member States and undertakes the political and legal mandates of Forum meetings.

Turning to the draft resolution on cooperation between the United Nations and the Pacific Islands Forum, A/69/L.90 is a biennial resolution. In essence, the draft resolution is a procedural and technical update, which refers to key recent developments in the relations between the Pacific Islands Forum and the United Nations over the past two years. It takes into account the recent major intergovernmental processes and internationally agreed outcomes and their relevance to the work of the United Nations and the Pacific Islands Forum, respectively, as well as the importance of enhancing cooperation between the two entities in these and other relevant areas, including the outcome of the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, the Samoa Pathway, which addresses sustainable development issues concerning small island developing States (SIDS), of which many are Pacific Islands Forum countries, the third United Nations Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the third International Conference on Financing for Development, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which will be considered for adoption by world leaders during the post-2015 summit to be held in two weeks' time.

Another new element that has been included in the draft resolution is the recognition of the importance of the work being undertaken by the Joint Inspection Unit on the comprehensive review of the United Nations system support for small island developing States, particularly in the context of the SIDS sustainable development challenges, and the relevance of ensuring effective United Nations system support for SIDS sustainable development efforts.

The draft resolution also takes into account the new development architecture of the Pacific Islands Forum, known as the Framework for Pacific Regionalism, adopted by the Forum leaders in July 2014. In brief, following a comprehensive review of the operations of the Pacific Islands Forum, the Forum leaders decided to recast the Forum's principal objectives, which are now incorporated in the Framework for Pacific Regionalism. The key objectives have been sustainable development that combines economic, social, and cultural development in ways that improve livelihoods, well-being and the sustainable use of the environment; economic growth that is inclusive and equitable; strengthened governance, accountable institutions and systems; and peace and security for all.

Finally, the draft resolution reaffirms the importance of ensuring that the sub-item on cooperation between the United Nations and the Pacific Islands Forum remains on the General Assembly's agenda in future years.

My delegation is of the firm view that the draft resolution is essentially a technical and procedural update on strengthening constructive cooperative relations between the Pacific Islands Forum and the United Nations. It is balanced, fair, forward-looking and representative of the main developments evolving at both the regional Pacific and the international levels.

In conclusion, therefore, on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum members and the other sponsors of the draft resolution, Papua New Guinea urges the General Assembly to adopt it by consensus.

The President: Before giving the floor to the speaker in explanation of position, may I remind delegations that explanations are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Beck (Solomon Islands): The Solomon Islands wishes to clarify that, while it is a member of the Pacific Islands Forum, it is regretfully unable to sponsor today's draft biennial draft resolution, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Pacific Islands Forum" (A/69/L.90), in its present form.

The draft resolution comes before us during a critical year in which we adopted the Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, concluded discussion on the 2030 agenda and adopted the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. All those frameworks call for a new form of relationship, a new political partnership and a paradigm shift in international cooperation between the United Nations and all regional organizations.

My delegation views today's draft resolution as important, since both the Pacific Islands Forum and the United Nations are centred on people and have a responsibility for the well-being of their peoples. That relationship is well defined in Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. In the view of the Solomon Islands, the relationship outlined in the draft resolution before us is not progressive enough. The agreed-on language from our sister regional organization for small island developing States (SIDS) and the United Nations, which was adopted during the current session and called for action by the United Nations and its specialized agencies, funds and programmes in order to intensify assistance to SIDS, was not accepted by the partners in this draft resolution. That is regrettable.

In my view, this is also a missed opportunity for developing an action-oriented partnership. My delegation finds it disturbing that, despite all the commitments that were announced during the post-2015 process, we are getting pushback even before our leaders have adopted the 2030 agenda. That raises the question of how serious we are about implementing our post-2015 agenda. Given the impact of climate change and our sustainable development challenges, time is a luxury we do not have. I am mindful that this draft resolution is a biennial one. The next opportunity to strengthen cooperation between the United Nations and the Pacific Islands Forum will be in 2017, in two years' time.

This reminds me of what the Secretary-General's predecessor, Kofi Annan, stated on more than one occasion while working on the outcome to the 2005 World Summit, which outlines contours for reforming the United Nations in order to make it more responsive to twenty-first-century conditions. He said that the United Nations was like a fire truck; it is putting out fires when it should be taking a more proactive role in preventing those fires from starting. What saddens my delegation is that something that was said 10 years ago is still a reality today in the Pacific. The United Nations system comes together annually to respond to disasters hitting the Pacific, but shies away multilaterally from building resilient societies and investing in our peoples. That is what our post-2015 agenda is all about. We see that gap in the draft resolution, and that is why we do not accept the proposed language.

The Solomon Islands values its relations with all the neighbouring countries that make up the Pacific Islands Forum and all those that have sponsored this draft resolution. We will not stand in its way. That said, if in future these draft resolutions do not allow for internal consultations among members of the regional organization concerned in order to define its relations with the United Nations and for time to engage with the wider membership on such resolutions, the Solomon Islands will call for a vote. Business as usual — or even incremental change — is no longer enough.

The President: We have heard the only speaker in explanation of position.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/69/L.90, entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Pacific Islands Forum".

I now give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Zhang Saijin (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of draft resolution A/69/L.90, in addition to those listed in the document, the following countries have become sponsors: Albania, Angola, Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Croatia, Cuba, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Greece, Guatemala, Guyana, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Jamaica, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Maldives, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Norway, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Senegal, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Somalia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Arab Emirates and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The President: May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/69/L.90?

Draft resolution A/69/L.90 was adopted (resolution 69/318).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (u) of agenda item 123?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 13 (*continued*)

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

(a) Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Draft resolution (A/69/L.84)

The President: Members will recall that the General Assembly held a debate on agenda item 13 and its sub-item (a), jointly with agenda item 115, and adopted resolution 69/15 at its 51st plenary meeting, on 14 November 2014. Members will also recall that, under sub-item (a) of agenda item 13, the Assembly adopted resolution 69/282 at its 92nd plenary meeting, on 3 June 2015, and resolution 69/310 at its 98th plenary meeting, on 6 July 2015.

I now give the floor to the representative of South Africa to introduce draft resolution A/69/L.84.

Mr. Mamabolo (South Africa): On behalf of members of the Group of 77 and China, I am honoured to introduce draft resolution A/69/L.84, entitled "Basic Principles on Sovereign Debt Restructuring Processes", under sub-item (a) of agenda item 13. The Group of 77 and China would like to congratulate the Ad Hoc Committee on Sovereign Debt Restructuring Processes for conducting and submitting its work. We would also like to thank Ambassador Sacha Llorentty Soliz of the Plurinational State of Bolivia for his leadership and stewardship as Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee. The Group also thanks the office of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development for its valuable support, which assists developing countries, where necessary, on issues such as debt restructuring.

The Group believes that the basic principles on sovereign debt restructuring processes in the draft resolution before us today are an important outcome and a good basis for future discussions on such issues. Those principles have been crafted in a way to ensure their inclusivity, non-intrusiveness and voluntary character. They should not favour one side over another. Both the rights of creditors and debtors are intended to be incorporated in the draft text in order to bring about a win-win situation for all concerned.

As several General Assembly resolutions have recognized, the issue of debt and its sustainability is essential for underpinning growth. In that regard, both debt sustainability and effective debt management, as well as the determination of adequate debt pre-payment capacity that does not impair sustainable development, are both factors to be considered in the efforts carried out by Member States to attain national and internationally agreed development goals, including the Sustainable Development Goals, in the context of future commitments of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. As States Members of the United Nations, we need to work together on sovereign debt restructuring and management process as we march with great vigour towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Indeed, the Agenda must leave no one behind. Sovereign debt matters concern both developed and developing countries. This should not be depicted as solely an issue for developing countries, but as a matter with the potential to upset the entire global economy.

The opportunity to have frank and an all-encompassing multilateral discourse on this issue, with all concerned on board, including the established international and regional financial institutions, should not be lost.

The Group also believes in the need for continuing efforts to address systematic fragilities and imbalances, and to reform and strengthen the international financial system, while reaffirming that multilateral institutions, including entities within the United Nations system and other relevant organizations, play an important role, in accordance with their respective mandates, in assisting countries in achieving and maintaining debt sustainability.

Ms. Rambally (Saint Lucia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We therefore urge support for the draft resolution, as it mainly contains preliminary work on sovereign restructuring processes. We will need all hands on deck in order to address this issue once and for all.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/69/L.84, entitled "Basic Principles on Sovereign Debt Restructuring Processes".

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kiribati, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nauru, Nepal, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Canada, Germany, Israel, Japan, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

Abstaining:

Albania, Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Colombia, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Gabon, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Draft resolution A/69/L.84 was adopted by 136 votes to 6, with 41 abstentions (resolution 69/319).

[Subsequently, the delegation of Spain informed the Secretariat that it had intended to abstain.]

The Acting President: Before giving the floor to the speakers in explanation of vote, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Ms. Lucas (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the States members of the European Union.

As we underscored on previous occasions, there should be no doubt that we recognize the major importance of sovereign debt restructuring, which has a significant impact on the global economy and on many countries in particular. Within the European

Union, we have also been seriously affected, whether on the creditor or on the debtor side.

We recall our reservations on the ways in which the original resolution 68/304, of 9 September 2014, and the subsequent resolution 69/247, of 29 December 2014, on modalities, were introduced and adopted. They made it impossible for us to participate in the process that led to today's resolution 69/319.

We take note of today's resolution, entitled "Basic Principles on Sovereign Debt Restructuring Processes", which includes various statements that do not accurately reflect international law or practices. While not being in a position to support it, in the light of the importance we all accord to the issue of sovereign debt restructuring, we will continue to take an active part in efforts aimed at tackling the challenges and identifying solutions in a constructive way.

We continue to believe that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is the appropriate institution to host global discussions on this subject and that the work on sovereign debt restructuring should remain in the IMF. We support the ongoing IMF efforts aimed at facilitating timely and orderly sovereign debt restructuring, where such a process is deemed necessary, based on a robust contractual approach, as well as the discussions in the Paris Club and in the Paris Forum on debt restructuring.

Furthermore, most recently with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, we collectively recognized the scope for improvements on this matter. The European Union will remain actively engaged in the related discussions.

Mr. Kononuchenko (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The acute debt crises of recent years have clearly illustrated the serious deficiencies in the existing system whereby sovereign debts are regulated. At a time of globalization, the consequences of conflicts between debtors and their creditors go beyond the sphere of bilateral relations and present increasing threat to regional and international financial stability. With the aim of preventing similar situations in future and strengthening consistency in the external loan market, the Russian Federation has always supported initiatives to improve the current system by which sovereign debt operations are restructured through the United Nations, as the most representative and inclusive global Organization.

Our delegation voted in favour of resolution 68/304. We actively supported the creation of the Ad Hoc Committee to establish a multilateral legal framework for sovereign debt restructuring processes. We believe that the principles elaborated by the Ad Committee and ratified today constitute an initial stage in the establishment of a sovereign debt restructuring process that is fair, predictable, balanced and effective. In our view, for the medium and long term, improving the implementation of sovereign debt restructuring operations is fundamental — in the interests of both creditors and debtors and through the development of a universal legal mechanism, which can apply to all types of external debt, and not solely to that of bond securities. We therefore believe that it would be wise to pursue the work already started, and we call on all countries of the Group of 20 — as well as international financial institutions — to take part in it.

Ms. Derderian (United States of America): As we have noted previously, the United States of America remains committed to the stability of the international financial system and to the development of its partners around the world. We respect the views of other Member States on this complex issue and acknowledge that the current sovereign debt restructuring system would benefit from further refinement, including more widespread adoption of updated collective action and pari passu clauses, as well as greater emphasis on public debt management.

Nonetheless, the proposed basic principles on sovereign debt restructuring processes are problematic in several respects, including language that could be construed as acknowledging a certain right to restructure sovereign debt that does not exist. The principles could also undermine the enforcement of contractual terms. Those and other concerns highlight the United States view that the United Nations is not best placed to address the issue of sovereign debt restructuring. As a separate issue, we note that it is unhelpful to make a distinction between Member and observer States, as the resolution does, whereas simply referring to States is a simpler, inclusive and preferable solution.

We will refrain from speaking to the issues in this text in more detail today, in consideration of our colleagues' time and in the light of the fact that our concerns are well known. Instead, we respectfully refer members to our prior statements on this process, including that of 9 September 2014 (see A/68/PV.107).

Our position has not changed, which is why we asked for a recorded vote on resolution 69/319 and voted against it.

Mr. Gunnarsson (Iceland): As we said at the beginning of this process in 2014, resolution 69/319 addresses a very real problem. We referred at the time to the Secretary-General's conclusion, in his report (A/69/167) on the matter, that international ad hoc arrangements for debt crisis resolution have resulted in incoherence and unpredictability. The problems and concerns about debt sustainability, which is one facet of sovereign debt restructuring, figure prominently in the Addis Ababa outcome document. In abstaining in the initial voting, we raised the question of what would be the right and proper international forum for that important cause. We also underlined that further work was needed in order to achieve a stronger consensus. It is our view that negotiations over the past two months have produced a balanced set of basic principles that should be used by the competent international organizations in the process of sovereign debt restructuring.

Given the balanced nature of the principles established, Iceland voted in favour of resolution 69/319.

Mr. Neelam (Australia): At the outset, let me say that Australia places great importance on improving sovereign debt restructuring processes. We recognize that that is an issue that is critical to affected economies around the world. For that reason, Australia has played and will continue to play a constructive role — through global forums — to find contractual solutions that improve the effectiveness of sovereign debt restructuring.

With regard to resolution 69/319, Australia does not support principle 1, which could be construed to imply that countries have a unilateral right to restructure their debt. We believe that any restructuring of debt should be the result of negotiation and mutual agreement between debtors and creditors. That is the reason that Australia abstained in the voting on this resolution today. Australia remains committed to engaging actively in the work of the International Monetary Fund, the Group of 20 and the Paris Club in order to effectively address this important issue.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote.

I shall now give the floor to those representatives who have requested the floor to make statements following the adoption of the resolution.

Mr. Timerman (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner and the people of Argentina, I would like very much to thank the great majority of United Nations Members that have understood the importance of resolution 69/319, which favours economic stability, peace in our societies and development. Today, debt is the cause of violence and inequality, creating a situation in which the powerful take advantage of less developed countries needing funds.

Why have we come here? Many countries have told us that this is not the right forum. However, it is the only forum that over the past 70 years of the history of the United Nations has adopted resolutions that have changed the course of the history of humankind. That has been achieved because this is a democratic forum where all sovereign countries have a voice and a vote. The Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, endorsed the decolonization and the self-determination of peoples and territorial integrity, adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and endorsed the peaceful settlement of disputes among States. It adopted the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, a Convention that was sponsored by the Republics of Argentina and France and based on the sad experience of the Argentine Republic with the forced disappearance of political activists during the last dictatorship.

If the Assembly is able to settle all those issues, which have unleashed major tragedies in the world, allowing the majority of us to understand the seriousness of those scourges and to resolve them, how is it not possible to say that this is not the right forum for addressing the issue of sovereign debt? Countries have a right to restructure sovereign debt. We have to put a limit on the pirates of the twenty-first century, which are nothing more than the vulture funds that have fed on the lack of global legislation and taken advantage of the poverty of many of the countries present in this Hall.

I am very proud of the fact that during this year, when we have worked so intensely, 12 additional countries have supported and voted in favour of the resolution and five have changed their negative votes, because this is not a question of winning. This is a democratic place. We did not come here to win anything; we came to convince people. That is why I thank the Assembly, which has moved this process forward very patiently and with a great deal of honour and much common sense, which has allowed us to reach this important juncture.

Finally, I would like to underscore the presence of our colleague, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, who has been kind enough to attend this meeting today. This is such an important day for all the countries of the Third World — Africa, Asia and Latin America — that are suffering and want to stop suffering the consequences of all the attacks against us by countries and vulture funds that do not wish to see us resolve our debt problem or to develop in peace and with political stability.

I would like to cede the floor to my colleague, Minister of Economy and Public Finances of Argentina Axel Kicillof, who is present with us today.

Mr. Kicillof (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank, together with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Assembly for its adoption of resolution 69/319, which has been an important resolution for us.

The current economic crisis has highlighted the fact that foreign debt has become for many countries — not just those that are part of the underdeveloped world, but many others around the world — a heavy burden that hinders them and endangers their growth, their inclusion and their creation of activities and jobs.

We know that many people are hoping that contractual clauses will solve the issue of debt restructuring. However, we believe that we have to change the international structure and financial architecture. The United Nations, which is a democratic, representative and equitable body, is the one entity that is able to do that. Setting these Basic Principles is a fundamental step towards ensuring that no one will suffer from the attacks by vulture funds that Argentina and many other countries are suffering from today. We welcome this resolution because it is a fundamental step for us to have a better world — a world free from vultures.

Ms. Rodríguez Gómez (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are truly experiencing what is called living history. We wish to send a warm embrace from the General Assembly to the President of the Argentine Republic, President Fernández. We send a warm greeting to her and her brave people because what has just happened in the Assembly is not just anything. As valiant Minister for Foreign Affairs Timerman, our South American brother, said, what has happened is bringing the voice of dignity of the people of our South America, Latin America and the Caribbean. What has occurred here is precisely a moment of dignity in which we overthrow the power of the vulture funds that spread misery and poverty throughout the world. We also venture to say that they lead to terrorist violence in other parts of the world.

Sovereign States are dominating and overpowering the vulture financial capital, which together with the media machinery is trying to impose its will on the world. What has occurred today, with all of the votes that bravely supported these principles, essentially ensures the sovereign possibility of regulating the financial capital of these vulture funds, which have subjected people to exploitation, misery, poverty and violence.

We are grateful and very happy to be in the Assembly. Once again, we are united as South Americans. We add our thanks to all the world's countries that, in this multilateral forum, are insisting on the fundamental principles of the United Nations: the principle of the self-determination of peoples, the principle of non-intervention of capitals in our sovereign States and countries, and the principle of the sovereign equality of States.

We have all come here to this necessary forum, as Foreign Minister Timerman has said, a forum that has taken historic steps and produced legal instruments that are relevant for all of humankind. We are very happy to have supported this vote and to have participated because we were also sponsors of a fundamental principle: the sovereign immunity of jurisdiction. We endorse the fact that what has occurred here will take away the power to act and govern from some funds and capitals that the people did not elect. It is the sovereign States, representing their people, that have the right to govern their destiny in a free, independent and sovereign manner.

I thank all the countries that have joined together and taken away stability from the vulture funds. Stability is what we must give to our people — stability, happiness and progress. This was a vote for the happiness of our people.

Mr. Rattray (Jamaica): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the 14 States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). CARICOM aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by the representative of Maldives on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States.

At the outset, CARICOM wishes to thank the Mission of Bolivia for its commitment and leadership during this process, which has culminated in the set of Basic Principles that have just been adopted by the Assembly.

CARICOM believes that these basic principles provide a useful framework for further discussions on debt restructuring towards the goal of making the process timely, orderly, effective and, most importantly, fair. As recent cases have highlighted, current market-based approaches to restructuring sovereign debt provide insufficient means by which to adequately address the vast amount of pre-existing debt owed to private creditors. It is therefore important that we agree to a Basic set of Principles that can underpin the negotiation of the orderly, constructive and consensual restructuring of the debt of sovereign States.

The matter of a multilateral framework for sovereign debt restructuring is of great interest to CARICOM member States in the light of the fact that unsustainably high debt burdens remain among the major challenges to the economic development of the region. Indeed, the average current debt-to-gross domestic product (GDP) ratio among CARICOM countries exceeds 70 per cent, with the most severely indebted countries having debt-to-GDP ratios in excess of 100 per cent. In several CARICOM countries, the primary surpluses required to reduce the stock of debt to sustainable levels range between 1.5 and 10 per cent of GDP. This scenario has fostered a situation where, across the subregion, debt servicing has far exceeded expenditure on social services, including health care and education, a fact that has had far-reaching implications for our overall socioeconomic development.

The situation becomes all the more critical as we move towards a post-2015 world and prepare, in mere weeks, to adopt, in this very Assembly, Agenda 2030, an agreement of the international community to pursue a sustainable development agenda with the eradication of poverty at its core. The placement of countries in debt distress on a sustainable debt path would enable them to achieve their prospects for economic recovery while simultaneously improving their ability to effectively meet their creditor obligations.

CARICOM member States' efforts to effectively address their unsustainable debt burdens have been constrained by their categorization as middle-income countries. This designation renders them ineligible for debt relief and severely limits their ability to access concessionary and grant-based financing. With a few exceptions, the region has not benefited from recent global debt-relief initiatives such as the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative or the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative.

In conclusion, CARICOM is of the view that indebted countries must be given an opportunity to undertake orderly debt-workout arrangements as a means of stabilizing their economies and returning to a path of sustained, inclusive economic growth. We believe that the Basic Principles on Sovereign Debt Restructuring Processes are therefore an important tool in arriving at this position, and we fully support resolution 69/319.

Mr. González Franco (Paraguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Paraguay, which holds the pro tempore chairmanship of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), welcomes the Basic Principles on Sovereign Debt Restructuring Processes. This set of principles, which must be observed in the restructuring of sovereign debt, was elaborated in order to establish a multilateral legal framework for debt-restructuring processes under resolution 69/247, of 2014, which established the Ad Hoc Committee on Sovereign Debt Restructuring Processes.

On behalf of the States parties to MERCOSUR, I should like to express our gratitude to the Plurinational State of Bolivia and the Argentine Republic, through their Permanent Representatives, for their leadership in the processes of consultation and negotiation that culminated today in the adoption of the Basic Principles, tools that will serve to limit the destructuring effect of risk capital funds.

Finally, I reiterate the rejection by the States parties to MERCOSUR of the attitude and the requests of a

minority group of non-restructured bondholders of the sovereign debt of Argentina, whose action makes it difficult to reach a final agreement between debtors and creditors and endangers the financial stability of countries, as stated in the joint communiqué of the Presidents of the States parties to MERCOSUR, meeting on the occasion of the forty-eighth regular session of the MERCOSUR Council, held in Brasilia on 17 July.

Mr. Koncke (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is my privilege to speak on behalf of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) in order to underscore the importance of the adoption of resolution 69/319, entitled "Basic Principles on Sovereign Debt Restructuring Processes".

There are various reasons why we believe that today an important step has been taken. First, as we have stated on previous occasions, the States members of UNASUR firmly believe that the United Nations is the Organization that has the role and legitimacy necessary to deal with issues of development. We therefore believe that the General Assembly, as the most democratic body of the Organization where all members are equally represented, is the appropriate forum for dealing with economic and financial questions as well, considering the current challenges.

Secondly, it is vital that the international system be able to rely on a system for the restructuring of sovereign debt under fair conditions, with mutual benefits for both creditors and debtors, without in any way affecting the development or welfare of countries and their peoples.

Thirdly, UNASUR deems it necessary to move towards a reorganization of the international financial architecture in order to reduce the negative impacts of an unstable global financial system. Here we believe that the stability and predictability of the international financial architecture requires that sovereign debt restructuring processes be carried out and respected.

Fourthly, problems related to external debt affect the international community as a whole, including both developed and developing countries, and restrict the capacity to create the conditions necessary for the exercise of human rights, in particular economic, social and cultural rights. Countries must use their scarce resources to pay down debt instead of being able to invest in the welfare of their peoples. Debt crises are costly and detrimental to employment and productive investment and in general lead to cuts in public spending, including on health and education. Indebtedness for any nation is an impediment to growth and development, and it also contributes to increasing unemployment and poverty.

For all of those reasons, it was essential for the regional and international financial community to respond robustly while emphasizing the inherent link between financing and development, and between sustainable growth and debt sustainability against the backdrop of the actual repayment capacity of countries and while maintaining equal treatment among creditors. We therefore welcome the adoption of resolution 69/319, which is the outcome of a year's work in a process of open and transparent negotiations.

Faced with the problem of sovereign debt restructuring, which is increasingly part of international discussions, we highlight the importance of having identified a number of principles that, under international law, already govern any restructuring of sovereign debt under both general principles of law and customary norms. Undoubtedly, this is a great contribution by the General Assembly in compiling and codifying those principles, as it will be highly useful to advancing discussions on the establishment of a multilateral legal framework that will make them even more effective.

In conclusion, these principles will not only serve as a clear guide as to how processes of sovereign debt restructuring are carried out, but will also contribute to the upcoming discussions on the subject that we must continue to follow up at the United Nations.

Mr. Sareer (Maldives): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS).

Debt sustainability is a significant challenge facing many small island developing States (SIDS) that is stalling efforts towards sustainable development. It is known that SIDS' ratio of gross domestic product to debt in 2014 stood on average at 57 per cent, as compared to 44 per cent in all other middle- and lower-income countries, thereby making SIDS more severely indebted than other developing countries. Our unique and particular vulnerabilities contribute to that higher debt scenario.

The basic principles in resolution 69/319 are clear, concise and present a useful reference for future action and dialogue on debt restructuring. The discussion of

those issues has long been recognized as important. AOSIS welcomes this resolution, which sets out the principles of transparency, impartiality, equality, sovereign immunity, sustainability, legitimacy and good-faith treatment for both debtors and creditors. The resolution has particular resonance as this time, as we are moving towards the implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

We thereore welcome the adoption of this timely and important resolution. We look forward to continuing this conversation.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is a pleasure, Madam, to have you preside over this important meeting of the General Assembly.

Given the time constraints, I will make a very brief statement in the context of my functions as Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Sovereign Debt Restructuring Processes, having been given that mandate by two resolutions of the Assembly.

I would first like very sincerely to commend the work of the Permanent Representative of Argentina to the United Nations, Ambassador Marita Perceval, as well as, of course, the work of Ministers Timerman and Kicillof, whose personal dedication to this very important issue I have seen for myself. Through them, I would like to convey my greetings to President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, who, along with her Government, has had the courage to confront, in an absolutely decisive way, the scourge of vulture funds — not only when it comes to Argentina, but for many other countries, especially developing countries.

I also wish to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his support to the work of the Ad Hoc Committee, as well as the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session, His Excellency Mr. Sam Kutesa. I thank them both in particular not just because it is a matter of protocol, but because they have devoted personal efforts to this very important resolution 69/319. For instance, when the International Monetary Fund refused to meet with the Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee, it was an action by the Secretary-General and by the President of the General Assembly that led the Fund to pay attention to a draft resolution originating in the Assembly and a mandated Committee.

In that connection, I should also like to acknowledge the work done by the Group of 77 under the chairmanship of South Africa and its Ambassador, Kingsley Mamabolo. His team has been crucial in arriving at this afternoon's successful outcome. Of course, I am also grateful for the work of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, and especially the team of Richard Kozul-Wright, which also played a very important role that is now reflected in the resolution. I also cannot fail to mention the rest of the Bureau of the Ad Hoc Committee, including vice-Chairs Niluka Kadurugamuwa of Sri Lanka and Khanim Ibrahimova of Azerbaijan, as well as the Rapporteur, Khaled Benamadi of Algeria. Their work has also been crucial to this outcome. I also wish to thank the Permanent Mission of the Plurinational State of Bolivia for its efforts.

This resolution is important because we are not talking just about the financial system, as we would be led to believe. This resolution has to do with the opportunities for growth in our countries. And when we talk about opportunities for growth, we are also talking about opportunities for development. And if we are talking about development, we are talking about social and economic rights. In turn, we are talking about the quality of our political systems — and ultimately about the issues of greatest concern to the Organization. When they tell us that this is not the appropriate forum to discuss these issues, what we are really being told is that we must play the game when they control the decisions, when they own the ball and when they get to determine the size of the field. That is not democracy. It goes against the principles of the Organization.

While we of course respect the fact that some countries voted against the resolution, we do not understand their reasons. In reading each of the principles, it is difficult to be opposed to the principles of good faith and transparency, or any of the other seven principles. Therefore, while we can respect that position as part of the sovereign right of every State, in my capacity as Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee, I do want to draw the Assembly's attention to the attitude of the International Monetary Fund. The Fund is not just an agency belonging to certain countries, it is part of the United Nations system. It was repeatedly invited to the Committee's meetings, but its seat remained unoccupied throughout. The International Monetary Fund must be reformed. It has to be democratized.

Otherwise, it will not respond to the principles —I repeat — of the United Nations system.

I thank all Member States for their efforts in adopting this resolution, which no doubt will be the dividing line of before and after in addressing this issue at the Organization.

The Acting President: I would like to kindly request that members limit their statements in order to enable us to deal with the agenda items as intended today, as we have another item to come on our agenda.

Mr. Bishnoi (India): India is pleased with the Assembly's adoption today of resolution 69/319. At the outset, I would like to warmly congratulate the delegation of Argentina on having taken the lead on this issue over the past several months. I would particularly like to acknowledge the presence here today of Argentina's Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship, Mr. Héctor Timerman, and His Excellency the Argentine Minister of Finance. I would like to convey our appreciation to the Permanent Representative of Bolivia for his sterling guidance of the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on Sovereign Debt Restructuring Processes.

The issue of sovereign debt restructuring has lately held centre stage in global discussions. It is not linked to any one country, nor is it a problem only for developing countries. There is also ample evidence that the issue is directly linked to the issue of the inclusive development and macroeconomic and political stability of countries and their peoples' welfare. With its adoption of today's resolution, the Assembly is codifying and formalizing a set of basic principles for sovereign debt restructuring processes, arrived at through the work of the Ad Hoc Committee in accordance with the Assembly's mandate. In doing so it is laying down a set of simple yet powerful markers that can provide a very helpful template for dealing with the issue of sovereign debt and its restructuring.

The adoption of the resolution today is also very timely, coming as it does as we wind down a very eventful and productive sixty-ninth session and begin our work towards a historic seventieth. In exercising its role as the supreme and universal global legislative body, the General Assembly is making a pronouncement about an important issue and doing so meaningfully, and the fact that the adoption of this resolution today coincides with the widely anticipated endorsement of a new 2030 agenda for sustainable development could not have been more propitious.

The integrated and indeed universal nature of that new agenda calls for an integrated and wide-ranging approach to the means for achieving sustainable development. A fair and balanced resolution of sovereign debt issues, which these guiding principles can help promote, can be helpful in creating the conditions for continued inclusive growth in debtor countries as well as their sustainable development, and can also promote global macroeconomic stability. The principles themselves are non-binding and thus preserve countries' sovereign policy space for designing their borrowing instruments to suit their specific circumstances while also taking into account other relevant factors. We hope that voluntary adherence to the principles will contribute greatly to preventing debt crises and to creating more efficient and fair debt-restructuring processes.

Mr. Teo (Singapore): Singapore voted in favour of resolution 69/319 today. In our view, the non-binding principles for sovereign debt restructuring are a practical outcome and conclusion of the processes of the Ad Hoc Committee. We appreciate the efforts made to consider the complex and wide-ranging interests involved, and we note the principles' recognition that the contractual rights of all creditors must be taken into account in any debt restructuring.

Our position on considering improved approaches to sovereign debt restructuring is well known. Any further consideration of improved approaches must secure the active, inclusive participation and engagement of both debtor and creditor countries, as well as of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other established international and regional financial institutions. That will enable us to comprehensively consider the various diverse perspectives and to work towards a more collaborative and effective outcome. In that regard, the IMF may be better placed to take discussions on sovereign debt restructuring forward.

Mr. Hermida Castillo (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): Our delegation welcomes Mr. Héctor Timerman, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Argentina, and the rest of his team, and commends the work of the Argentine delegation, particularly Ambassador María Cristina Perceval. We would also like to thank Ambassador Sacha Llorentty Soliz of Bolivia for his leadership of the Ad Hoc Committee on Sovereign

Debt Restructuring Processes. We are grateful for the initiative of our sister republic, Argentina, in bringing this important debate on sovereign debt to the Assembly and helping to raise Member States' awareness of the importance of implementing mechanisms that can help prevent and resolve financial crises.

We are pleased that the Group of 77 and China has taken on this important initiative, and we welcome the adoption today of resolution 69/319, which covers the basic principles for sovereign debt restructuring. Our delegation voted in favour of the resolution in the belief that those principles should serve as a foundation for a legal framework for any future agreements we may wish to arrive at for the benefit of all our peoples. They are also essential at this crucial moment in our history, when we are preparing to adopt a post-2015 agenda that includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets, since they will enable us to establish the political space we need to implement those goals.

Nicaragua would like to emphasize the undisputed role of the United Nations, particularly the General Assembly, as a universal, democratic and equitable forum that can help us ensure the legitimacy of the most important decisions we have to make, particularly those on economic and financial issues, which affect every person living on this planet. We regret that we could not count on the participation in the discussion of this topic of other relevant actors, whose absence displays a lack of political will and interest in resolving an issue that affects the entire international community, regardless of levels of development.

While because of this we have had to put to a vote a resolution that should have been adopted by consensus, this situation should be of equal concern for developed and developing countries. All Member States should work to achieve debt sustainability, which is essential to supporting growth and achieving national and international development goals, including the Sustainable Development Goals.

Mr. Reyes Rodríguez (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are very grateful to you for overseeing our work, Madam. I would like to welcome the presence of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Argentina and Venezuela and of Argentina's Minister of Finance. We congratulate Ambassador María Cristina Perceval, who was fully involved in this effort and whose birthday it is today.

Today is also a historic day for the United Nations. For the first time, after decades of discussion within the framework of the Organization, we finally have a set of principles for guiding States and other international actors in solving the problems associated with foreign debt. For years, our peoples have made enormous sacrifices to honour their financial foreign commitments, compromising their right to development and to their own basic living conditions. By contrast, wealthy usurers and speculators had raised their expectations, rationales and ambitions to profit from hunger, illiteracy, disease and the denial of the dream of a better future for our children, women and men. Foreign debt and the actions of vulture funds predators are scourges affecting all developing countries.

Thanks to the unity of the Group of 77 and China, with South Africa as its Chair, and to the leadership of Mr. Llorentty Solíz, Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Sovereign Debt Restructuring Processes, the United Nations now has a set of clear and strong principles to face the problem of resolving the problem of sovereign debt. But that is just the beginning of the long path we must follow if we wish to find a just and rational solution to the problem of the foreign debt of developing countries, which we have paid over and over again merely for its accrued interest. Those principles serve as a confirmation of the solidarity of the international community with the commitment of peoples and authorities, and in particular that of leaders, including the President of Argentina, who have made social justice the heart of their work. We will not be able to ensure that the countries of the South will receive justice in the future, but we have made a vital contribution to establishing an international framework that challenges the impunity enjoyed by the speculators who have ruined our countries.

Mr. Olguín Cigarroa (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): We have today adopted resolution 69/319 on the Basic Principles on Sovereign Debt Restructuring Processes, submitted by the Group of 77 and China (G-77). We endorse the statements made on behalf of the G-77 and the Union of South American Nations. We also welcome the presence of Mr. Héctor Marcos Timerman, Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Mr. Axel Kicillof, Minister of Economy and Public Finances of Argentina, and commend Argentina's great efforts to introduce to this body a subject of global impact that requires a global response. The perseverance of the Permanent Representative of Argentina, Ambassador

María Cristina Perceval, and members of her Mission has been of particular importance.

In our view, the restructuring sovereign debt is an issue of the global agenda whose importance merits discussion in the United Nations, the global forum par excellence where all countries of the international community can participate and contribute. Thus, sovereign debt has been addressed in the two documents that have distinguished this sixty-ninth session: the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, in section E of its chapter II (resolution 69/313), on debt and debt sustainability, and Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development, which in point 3 of its target 17, appeals to countries to help promote long-term debt sustainability, including restructuring processes for debt.

The evidence shows us that countries remain indebted, and that it has become increasingly necessary to have ules on sustainability and debt restructuring processes. Today's resolution 69/319 will help to open a debate on this issue in which other international bodies will also be able to add their voice. There is a need to include this matter within the framework of international standards and apply the rule of law, and to take into account the impact of debt on development and the quality of life of peoples and the central role of the General Assembly in addressing issues of global impact, such as the resolution that we have adopted. These are all elements that Chile bore in mind when we lent our support to the resolution.

Mr. Antonio de Aguiar Patriota (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to welcome to the General Assembly Ministers Héctor Timerman and Axel Kicillof, other officials from Argentina, including Permanent Representative María Cristina Perceval, and commend her leadership on this issue of strategic importance to all Members of the Organization. I also take this opportunity to commend the Permanent Representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Ambassador Llorentty Soliz, and to thank him for his dedication in conducting the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on Sovereign Debt Restructuring Processes over the past few months.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements made by the representatives of South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, Paraguay on behalf of the Common Market of the South, and Uruguay on behalf of the Union of South American Nations.We would like to make a few comments in our national capacity.

The issue of debt restructuring has crucial implications for the stability and balance of the international financial system, and for the future implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The current architecture for restructuring debt is not sustainable and has to be amended to allow for the achievement of the 17 sustainable development goals and their 169 targets. The need to amend the current architecture was recognized in the reform and amending of the pari passu clauses and the collective action proposed by the International Capital Markets Association, with the endorsement of the International Monetary Fund, and recently by the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, as adopted in July in Ethiopia.

The 10 Basic Principles that we have adopted today are the outcome of lengthy consultations in the United Nations and reflect reasonable parameters for the effective, sustainable, fair and orderly conduct of sovereign debt restructuring processes. The delegation of Brazil regrets the fact that not all international financial mechanisms participated in the discussions of the Ad Hoc Committee on Sovereign Debt Restructuring Processes, but we would urge them to take those into account in a timely fashion.

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 13.

Agenda item 120

Strengthening of the United Nations system

Draft resolution (A/69/L.87/Rev.1)

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Iraq to introduce draft resolution A/69/L.87/Rev.1.

Mr. Alhakim (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Republic of Iraq, in its capacity as Chair of the Group of Arab States for the month of September, has the honour of introducing, on behalf of all Arab countries and 52 States Members of the United Nations, draft resolution A/69/L.87/Rev.1, entitled, "Raising the flags of non-member observer States at the United Nations," under agenda item 120, "Strengthening of the United Nations system".

The draft resolution before the Assembly appears to be rather restrained, but it conveys a great deal symbolically. It has been drafted according to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and reaffirms our faith in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small. The draft resolution pertains to the participation of non-member observer States that maintain permanent observer missions at Headquarters and recalls that the State of Palestine became a non-member observer State at the United Nations on 29 November 2012, and previous relevant resolutions.

Paragraph 1 of the draft resolution stipulates that

> "the flags of non-member observer States at the United Nations maintaining permanent observer missions at Headquarters shall be raised at Headquarters and United Nations offices following the flags of the States Members of the United Nations".

Paragraph 2 requests the Secretary-General to

> "take the measures necessary for the implementation of this decision during the seventieth session of the General Assembly and within 20 days of the adoption of the present resolution".

In conclusion, I would urge Member States to lend their full support to and to vote in favour of the draft resolution because it represents an important step towards supporting the Palestinian people and their right to self-determination, independence and their due place among States.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now proceed to consider draft resolution A/69/L.87/Rev.1.

Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote before the voting, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Braun (Germany): Germany has thoroughly considered the draft resolution before it today, the adoption of which changes decades of an uncontested and established practice within the United Nations. The raising of flags at Headquarters has always been associated with full membership within the United Nations, in accordance with the Secretary-General's Flag Code of 1952 and regulations dating from 1967. Germany is unaware of any compelling reason that would justify changing the established practice. That is why Germany will abstain in the voting on draft resolution A/69/L.87/Rev.1.

Our abstention should in no way give rise to any interpretation on the state of relations between Germany, the Holy See and Palestine. Germany is aware that the Holy See is not a sponsor of the draft resolution. Germany firmly believes in a negotiated two-State solution and strongly supports the aim of establishing an independent State of Palestine, living side by side in peace and security with Israel. We actively worked towards that end for years and contributed to the development of governmental institutions and State infrastructure in the Palestinian territories.

However, a two-State solution that is not based on a comprehensive final status agreement that ends all claims and fulfils the aspirations of both sides will not be sustainable. We call on both sides to engage in serious negotiations without conditions or further delay. Germany stands ready to support all efforts towards relaunching a substantial negotiation process and underlines the importance of renewed engagement on the part of the international community, including the Quartet and regional actors.

Mr. Nickert (Austria): Draft resolution A/69/L.87/Rev.1, before us today, deals with the display of flags — a matter that has always been associated with full membership of the Organization. It has to be kept in mind that the decision today will set a precedent for the future that will also apply to all future observer States. We also note that many of the current Member States from the European Union, including Austria, had observer status before joining the Organization as full Members and had to wait for their full admission before their flag was raised at Headquarters. That represents the common practice for all international organizations.

We were not provided with a convincing reason of a general nature to justify changing the long-held practice of limiting the display of flags to those of Member States. Furthermore, we would like to point out that a display of flags at all United Nations premises is the prerogative of the Secretary-General, as mandated by the General Assembly in resolution 92 (I) of 1946.

I would like to note in that context that our position does not affect Austria's support of Palestine's wish to become a full Member of the United Nations, as part of a comprehensive solution to the conflict. Together with our partners in the European Union, we have consistently worked to advance the Palestinian

Authority's State-building efforts, and we will continue to do so. We believe that the focus needs to be on a return to meaningful negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians in order to achieve a lasting and just solution to the conflict, which can only be a two-State solution. Based on the considerations of principles heretofore outlined, Austria will therefore abstain in the voting on the draft resolution.

Ms. Power (United States of America): The United States has long been, is today, and will remain committed to achieving the peace that Palestinians and Israelis deserve: two States for two peoples, with a sovereign, viable, and independent Palestinian State, living side by side in peace and security with a Jewish and democratic Israel. We all know that a sustainable and just resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will be reached only through hard choices and compromise and negotiated by the parties. Raising the Palestinian flag outside Headquarters is not an alternative to negotiations and will not bring the parties closer to peace.

The United States will vote against draft resolution A/69/L.87/Rev.1, but this vote is not a vote for the status quo or a rejection of Palestinian aspirations for statehood. Our vote reflects the reality that the parties themselves must ultimately take the constructive and responsible steps required to achieve a two-State solution and end the cycle of violence and suffering that has persisted for far too long in the Middle East.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote before the voting.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/69/L.87/Rev.1, entitled "Raising the flags of non-member observer States at the United Nations".

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Botnaru (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution, and in addition to those delegations listed in the document, the following countries have also become sponsors of A/69/L.87/Rev.1: Afghanistan, Argentina, Bangladesh, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Chad, Comoros, Cuba, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, El Salvador, Guinea, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Namibia, Nicaragua, Niger, Pakistan, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, the Syrian Arab Republic, Turkey and Zimbabwe.

The Acting President: A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Chad, Chile, China, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Fiji, France, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Libya, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Qatar, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Zimbabwe

Against:

Australia, Canada, Israel, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Palau, Tuvalu, United States of America

Abstaining:

Andorra, Austria, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Colombia, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary,

Latvia, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Monaco, Myanmar, Nauru, Netherlands, Norway, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Samoa, Singapore, Slovakia, Switzerland, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Trinidad and Tobago, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Vanuatu

Draft resolution A/69/L.87/Rev.1 was adopted by 119 votes to 8, with 45 abstentions (resolution 69/320).

[Subsequently, the delegation of Zambia advised the Secretariat that it had intended to vote in favour.]

The Acting President: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Prosor (Israel): Once again, the Assembly has convened to debate a crucially important matter. Member States will be asked to make a decision that will reflect on how this institution will be perceived. No, I am not referring to the Palestinian flag. The lives of Israelis and Palestinians will remain the same whether or not a Palestinian flag flies in New York. I am speaking of a much more important decision. The real question we face is not whether the Palestinians will raise a flag, but whether the United Nations will raise a white flag and surrender the principles of this institution itself.

Next month, I will complete more than four years as Israel's Permanent Representative to the United Nations. During my time here, I have met with diplomats from all around the world, I have participated in many meetings of the General Assembly and the Security Council, and I have even had the honour to preside over this very Assembly. In my four years, I have seen hypocrisy, I have seen duplicity and I have seen a triple standard: one for democracies, one for dictatorships and a special standard designed only for Israel. I thought I had seen everything, but I have to admit that this time the Palestinians have managed to take cynicism to a whole new level.

The goal of resolution 69/320 is a photo opportunity. The Palestinians want to bring together world dignitaries and the media to gather around and watch as Mahmoud Abbas raises a flag. They plan to use the prestige of the United Nations as a backdrop for this charade. Surprise, surprise — they did all this in contravention of all the established rules and procedures of the United Nations. During every session of the Assembly, hundreds of resolutions are adopted and hundreds of decisions are taken, from the most significant to the merely procedural. Yet, I cannot remember one time — not a single one — where Member States were not given an opportunity for discussion, debate and reflection.

Representatives here in this Hall know better than anyone else how exhausting, cumbersome and frustrating this process can sometimes be. Do we always enjoy this process? Probably not, yet we do it because we all understand that this deliberative and collaborative process represents the ideals that this institution was supposed to stand for: democracy, transparency and open communication. We do it because, although we have real differences, we all value the process and have respect for the countries represented here — their points of view and beliefs. We all understand that this is the only way that this institution can function.

However, in my time here, I have learned that there is one delegation that all those rules and procedures do not apply to. Again and again, the Palestinians seem to be able to do whatever they want and are free to act with impunity. In short, they have learned that the more they say no, the more the international community says yes to their every whim and caprice. So it is no surprise that the Palestinians show no regard for the values of this institution and that they cynically manipulate the United Nations to score political points. Time and again, the Palestinians use and abuse the United Nations. The sad part is that delegations in this Hall allow them to get away with it.

Let us consider the events of the past two weeks. As the summer began to wind down and this session was drawing to a close, the Palestinians surprised Member States with a draft resolution proposing to change a rule that has been in existence since the United Nations was founded. Did they circulate a zero draft of the resolution? Perhaps they just forgot. Did they invite Member States to any informal consultation? I guess they could not be bothered. Did they negotiate the language of the resolution with Member States? Of course not. They knew that most Member States would sign on the dotted line no matter what it said. As a matter of fact, the Palestinian delegation simply announced its plan, promoted it in a dishonest and

manipulative manner, and expected Member States to fall in line behind it.

As if this behaviour were not bad enough, the story does not end there. Not only did the Palestinians blatantly disregard United Nations practices, they deliberately deceived Member States. When they introduced their initiative, the Palestinians informed Member States that the Vatican was a partner in their plan. Apparently, the Vatican did not get the memo. This blatant lie was exposed to all by the media. As a matter of fact, the Vatican declared that it is not a partner to this initiative; it did not ask for it and it has no aspiration to raise its flag at the United Nations. The Palestinians were caught red-handed violating every principle of honesty and integrity we hold dear.

Yet, despite this brazen deception, which every delegation in this Hall knows of, many representatives here still voted to adopt this resolution. Voting in favour of the resolution means that, when it comes to the Palestinians, the standard rules no longer apply. More important than whether we permit the Palestinians to fly a flag is whether we permit them to undermine the rules and procedures and, ultimately, the credibility of this institution. How ironic is it that this resolution was considered under the agenda item "Strengthening of the United Nations system", when it clearly weakens and undermines the United Nations.

Let no one in this Hall or around the world be fooled by the outcome of today's vote. The Assembly would vote to declare that the Earth was flat if the Palestinians proposed it. By the way, the European Union (EU) would probably try to reach a consensus to abstain in the voting, but some EU countries would consider it a matter of principle to declare that the world is indeed flat if it now is how the Palestinians see it. Speaking of consensus, apparently the EU's principles of maintaining a holy consensus cannot withstand Palestinian pressure. Yet they stand firm when the consensus is against Israel.

However, no vote can turn an empty, symbolic gesture into a State. The international community must make it clear to the Palestinians that the only way to achieve statehood is through direct negotiations. As long as the Palestinians believe that they can achieve their political goals without making concessions, they will continue to avoid taking the difficult decisions needed for peace. Maybe the international community should recommend that the Palestinians download the Waze GPS application so that they can find their way to the negotiating table. Then they would be able to discover that the distance from Ramallah to Jerusalem is less than 10 miles. There is no need to fly halfway around the world to New York in order to make peace.

Unfortunately, instead of trying to guide the Palestinians down the path to peace, the international community is helping them to ride off the tracks. We do not need support groups or preconditions that only complicate the situation. Too many are addicted to the process. This is not a meeting of Diplomats Anonymous. What we do need is for the international community to tell the Palestinians to go back to the negotiating table. Enough with empty symbols, enough with political showmanship, enough with hijacking the United Nations agenda. Stop stalling and start negotiating.

Palestinians and Israelis need real steps to peace, not empty gestures. The vote today may serve the interests of Palestinians leaders, but it will not help the Palestinian people.

The whole situation would be different if the flag they want to raise represented democratic values, which are all too rare in the region. Those who support raising this flag should ask themselves: is it a flag of good governance? Is it a flag of gender equality? Is it a flag of free elections, so desperately needed in a place where President Abbas is in his 11th year of a five-year term?

If the international community does not demand that the Palestinians enact these basic rights and freedoms, the flag they raise will be a flag of disappointment rather than hope, and of failure rather than progress.

The people of Israel seek peace with our neighbours. Just this morning, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met with Prime Minister David Cameron in London and declared once again that he was ready to come and resume direct negotiations with the Palestinians, anywhere, without preconditions.

We all remember the historic images of Prime Minister Begin and President Sadat, and of Prime Minister Rabin and King Hussein, coming together in peace. History proves to us that negotiations can be fruitful, that peace is possible and that we can create a new reality for the peoples of the region.

And now, in my final statement as Israel's Permanent Representative, I say to the Assembly that I look forward to seeing the image of an Israeli Prime

Minister and a Palestinian leader standing side by side, raising the flags of our two peoples, living together in peace. That would be a photo truly worth taking.

Mr. Radomski (Poland): Poland takes the floor to explain its decision to support the draft resolution on raising the flags of non-member observer States, the Holy See and Palestine, at the United Nations. We would like to emphasize that we treat resolution 69/320 as a technical matter, without any consequences for the position of Poland on the issue of the Middle East peace process. A flag is a symbol. People fight and sometimes die for what it represents. A flag is an important element of identity. We the people of Poland know how much it means. The Polish flag was our symbol at a time when there was no Poland on the maps of the world.

Let me reiterate that Poland supports the settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the form of a comprehensive political agreement between the parties to the conflict guaranteeing a lasting and durable peace. We share the view that the only possible way to resolve the conflict is through direct negotiations between the parties. It is important that they refrain from unilateral measures and acts on the ground that undermine confidence in the viability of the two-State solution.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): France voted in favour of the draft resolution submitted today that authorizes non-member observer States to raise their flags at the United Nations following those of Member States.

This vote is first of all a vote in favour of the two-State solution, which must remain our common goal; it is more than ever that of France. France has also made the choice of consistency. As early as 1982, before the Knesset, President Mitterrand called for the creation of a Palestinian State. France has since then not diverged from that path, supporting at each stage the enhancement of the the status of Palestine. In 2011, France voted in favour of the admission of Palestine as a member of UNESCO. In 2012, it voted in favour of resolution 67/19, which made Palestine a non-member observer State of our Organization.

Allowing Palestine to raise its flag at the United Nations is a new step in that direction. France could not but once again show its commitment to the right of Palestinians to a State and to the two-State solution, which is today in danger. France misses no opportunity to reiterate Israel's right to exist and to live in safety.

We agree that this vote is primarily symbolic. But symbols are essential in politics, particularly for the Palestinian people, who should not despair of the future. This flag is therefore a powerful symbol and a glimmer of hope. Let us have the courage and the clear-sightedness to say that, unfortunately, every day that goes by takes us further from the two-State solution. The pursuit of the illegal settlement process is a direct threat thereto. This absence of political perspective is not only unfair to the Palestinian people; it is also dangerous for Israel, for the other States of the region, for the European Union and for the world as a whole. It fuels despair and leads to violence.

We must therefore be clear. The negative dynamic that is unfolding before our eyes cannot serve the interests of the parties. It can only fuel hatred and extremism, on which terrorists feed, especially Daesh. In this disturbing context, every opportunity must be seized to recall the hope of the two-State solution. France believes that this conflict can be resolved only by the establishment of an independent, viable and democratic Palestinian State, living in peace and security side by side with Israel.

But while we appreciate the importance of symbols, we cannot be satisfied with gestures alone. Given the gravity of the situation, symbols are no longer enough. All that counts is action. France, which for more than a year has been endeavouring to create new prospects and a credible dynamic, is more convinced of this than ever before. Everyone agrees that the peace process that we have pursued for 20 years has failed. For France, credible and strong action can be based only on two complementary pillars. In the short term, we must promote increased commitment on the part of the international community through international support for the peace process that complements the efforts of the Quartet and strengthens its ability to generate consensus. Following that, a framework must be defined for future negotiations to which the Security Council can contribute in due course.

The seventieth session of the General Assembly must mark the launch of the first pillar of this action with the establishment of an international support group that includes new partners alongside the members of the Quartet, namely, the permanent members of the Security Council and some Arab and European countries. Doing nothing is not an option and would run the risk of major destabilization. France advocates action and the convergence of the international

community's efforts towards the shared goal of a two-State solution in order to achieve peace and justice. That is the rationale behind France's vote today and of its ongoing commitment.

Mr. Díaz de la Guardia Beuno (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to raise two brief points with respect to resolution 69/320, on raising the flags of non-member observer States at the United Nations.

First, Spain's vote in favour of the resolution was consistent with its support for resolution 67/19. Secondly, Spain's vote in favour should not be interpreted as recognizing Palestine as a State, which can occur only in the framework of a final and comprehensive settlement in the Middle East peace process based on a two-State solution reached in the course of negotiations between the parties that guarantees peace and security for both, respect for the rights of all citizens, and overall stability.

Mr. Carrera Castro (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): Guatemala thanks the State of Palestine for its initiative concerning resolution 69/320. The Government of Guatemala recognizes and supports Palestine as a free, independent and sovereign State.

We considered this initiative carefully. We believe that the resolution focuses on one of the exclusive rights of a full Member of the Organization, as distinct from an observer State. In that regard, we should have liked to see the resolution discussed by the membership, and to have had enough time to consider its implications and precedents respecting other international organizations and their observer States. We therefore decided to abstain in the voting on the resolution adopted today. We reiterate that our decision to abstain is without prejudice to the excellent relations we enjoy with the observer States of the United Nations and is confined to the procedural and institutional context.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): Sweden decided to vote in favour of resolution 69/320. That is a natural step following Palestinian State-building efforts, recognized by the General Assembly on 29 November 2012 in resolution 67/19, in which Palestine was accorded status as a non-member observer State at the United Nations. It is also a logical consequence of the Swedish recognition of the State of Palestine on 30 October 2014. That recognition was aimed at making the parties to the conflict less unequal, providing a positive injection into the dynamic of the Middle East peace process, and rendering the two-State solution possible again.

Unfortunately, the situation on the ground has worsened and the peace process is stalled. We hope that the General Assembly, with this vote today, will send forth a tiny ripple of hope to the young generations in the region — Israelis and Palestinians — that peace is still possible.

Mr. Aliyev (Azerbaijan): Azerbaijan voted in favour of resolution 69/320. We consider this initiative to be a reflection of the legitimate will and aspiration of the State of Palestine to become a full-fledged Member of the United Nations. We reiterate our support for Palestine's application for admission to membership of the United Nations and look forward to a solution to that issue based on international law. Azerbaijan remains committed to a two-State solution that will bring peace and stability to the Middle East.

Mr. Sauer (Finland): Let me start by reiterating Finland's steadfast support for the non-member observer status of Palestine at the United Nations, in line with resolution 67/19, which Finland voted in favour of in 2012, as well as our support for the similar status enjoyed by the Holy See.

However, we have considered resolution 69/320, before us today, on its own merits and without direct reference to the situations of Palestine and the Holy See. We have considered that the current practice of raising only the flags of Member States at United Nations Headquarters, as stipulated by the United Nations flag code and regulations, has been well in line with the common practice in all international organizations. We therefore decided to abstain in the voting on the resolution.

Finland is committed to a just and comprehensive resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in accordance with the common European Union position, and continues to lend its support to the formation of the Palestinian State as part of the negotiated two-State solution.

Mr. Menkveld (Netherlands): The General Assembly has decided today to change the protocol to include henceforth the flags of non-member observer States at the United Nations. The Kingdom of the Netherlands chose to abstain in the voting on resolution 69/320 for procedural reasons. The Kingdom of the Netherlands is not convinced that compelling reasons exist for changing the established practices concerning the flag protocol at the United Nations.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands would also like to reiterate that the Netherlands will continue its long-standing support for the Palestinians. We support the Palestinian State-building efforts. Our contribution in such key sectors as water, agriculture, security and the rule of law totals approximately €50 million a year. Just recently, we pledged an additional contribution of €2 million to enable the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East to continue its landmark education programme.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands remains in favour of a two-State solution, with the State of Israel and an independent, democratic, sovereign and viable State of Palestine living side by side in peace, security and mutual recognition. The Kingdom of the Netherlands is committed to a just and lasting peace and supports initiatives for a renewed approach to the peace process, including a new format for negotiations with a substantial role for the European Union (EU) and Arab partners alongside the United States. The Kingdom of the Netherlands fully subscribes to the EU position on parametres, which we believe provides a basis for achieving consensus on a way forward.

Mr. Menelaou (Cyprus): Cyprus abstained in the voting on resolution 69/320, on raising the flags of non-member observer States at the United Nations. Cyprus's abstention should be viewed in the light of the challenges and issues that have arisen from the situation in Cyprus since 1974, which compel us to adhere to the principle that only full Members of the United Nations should be entitled to all the privileges enjoyed by the Members of the Organization.

Cyprus has recognized the State of Palestine since 1988, and we voted in favour of resolution 67/19, which acknowledged Palestine as a non-member observer State in this Organization. Furthermore, in December 2012, Palestine's representation in Cyprus was upgraded to a full embassy and the Palestinian Ambassador was added to our protocol list of foreign diplomatic missions. Cyprus looks forward to the revival of a peace process aimed at achieving a two-State solution for an independent, democratic, viable and contiguous Palestinian State within its 1967 borders, living side by side in peace and security with Israel and its other neighbours.

Mr. Ellinger (Czech Republic): The Czech Republic has considered resolution 69/320 based on its substance and in an objective manner, unrelated to consideration of any individual observer State that the resolution may concern now or in the future. The Czech Republic fully aligns itself with the principle that raising a flag at the headquarters of any international organization is a right reserved exclusively to the members of such organizations. Such has been the practice so far not only in the United Nations but in other international organizations as well. We have not been presented with any convincing reasons for departing from that principle and established practice, since the participation of non-member observer States in the meetings and work of the General Assembly is in no way affected by the measures proposed in the resolution. For those reasons, the Czech Republic abstained in the voting on the resolution.

Mr. Hannigan (Iceland): In December 2011, Iceland recognized Palestine as an independent and sovereign State. In November 2012, Iceland voted in favour of granting the State of Palestine observer status at the United Nations. Iceland would like to see Palestine become a State Member of the United Nations as soon as possible. Flying a flag is not a substitute for membership, but it will underline the presence and participation of the State of Palestine in the work of the United Nations. The flying of observer State flags will be a new tradition, but we see no danger of its blurring the line between members and observers. We therefore welcomed resolution 69/320 and voted in favour of it.

Mr. Meek (United Kingdom): The Government of the United Kingdom decides its voting position based on the text of each draft resolution presented. It has traditionally been the case that only flags of States Members of the United Nations are flown at its Headquarters. Despite our long-held support for the creation of a Palestinian State, we have not been provided with any compelling reason to justify changing that long-standing practice. We have therefore chosen to abstain on resolution 69/320.

Our abstention does not change our long-standing position on resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. A just and lasting settlement is long overdue. The prospect of a peace agreement has been diminishing in recent years, and a clear political horizon is desperately needed. The worsening situation on the ground in the occupied Palestinian territories is of great concern and must be addressed. As we said when Palestine was granted non-member observer State status in November 2012, we want to see a Palestinian State represented throughout all the organs of the United Nations.

However, it remains our firm belief that a negotiated two-State solution is the only way to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict once and for all, and that it remains the best way to achieve Palestinian national aspirations in reality and on the ground. Our priority continues to be one of working with the parties and our international partners to safeguard the prospects for a two-State solution and create an environment conducive to a return to peace talks. We will continue to encourage and support both the Palestinian and Israeli leadership in taking the difficult decisions needed to achieve peace. That is the only way to end the occupation and to deliver the peace and security that both Israelis and Palestinians so deserve.

Mr. Zaayman (South Africa): South Africa wishes to be among the first to endorse and congratulate this non-member observer State of the United Nations. Our long and principled support of the Palestinian people's inalienable right to self-determination is informed by our own history and struggle for freedom, justice and a high regard for human rights. The struggle of the people of Palestine has been long and full of upheaval, but with the passing of time, their resilience and persistence has brought them closer and a step further towards their cherished goals.

South Africa wishes to reaffirm its support for international efforts aimed at establishing a viable Palestinian State, existing side by side in peace with Israel, within international recognized borders based on those existing on 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Ms. Stener (Norway): Resolution 69/320 deals with the question of raising flags, which is traditionally associated with membership in all international organizations. In our view, the resolution constitutes a precedent that contributes to erasing the difference between member States and observers in international organizations. That is why Norway abstained in the voting on the resolution. That should in no way be interpreted as a change in Norway's position supporting Palestine as a non-member observer State within the United Nations.

Norway continues to support the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side within secure and recognized borders. A comprehensive, just and lasting peace can be achieved only on the basis of a negotiated solution between the parties. We appeal to both sides to urgently resume comprehensive negotiations.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote for this meeting. We will now hear statements after the adoption of resolution 69/320.

Ms. Rodríguez Gómez (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Today we have seen an afternoon of justice in the General Assembly through our adoption of resolution 69/319, by which we deprived vulture capital funds of their power, and resolution 69/320, by which we approved the raising of the Palestinian flag.

We have listened carefully to every speaker, because there has unquestionably been a great deal of food for thought. If we really believe in this — and I think that has been the case today — we have voted not just for raising the flag, we have voted for what the flag of the Palestinian State means and symbolizes. And we have therefore also voted for the right of the Palestinian people to return to their territory and their right not to be killed. That began with their territorial displacement and has now led to the terrible slaughter of a people.

I know that there is a shared concern in the hearts of all those who voted in favour of raising that flag and in the conscience of all the countries who voted for it. We know about the terrible and continued violations of human rights of the Palestinian people, who are being exterminated. I emphasize that the issue now is not just one of defending territory but of defending a people's very existence, and it is for that vital reason that we raise our voices and open our consciences and our hearts today.

This year, Pope Francis called the President of the Palestinian State an angel of peace. We say that all the children boys, girls, women and elderly people who continue to resist extermination and the violation of their human rights are also angels of peace. Therefore, if we truly believe in the existence of two States, how much longer will we have to wait for Palestine to be a State enjoying full rights in the Organization? How much longer will we have to bear witness to the slaughter of the Palestinian people? I have heard the arguments of the delegations that opposed the resolution, and I have just one thing to say. Theirs was the voice of the arrogant forces of war. There is no other way to describe such arrogance when the entire world does not support such criminal, bellicose stances.

We in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela warmly embrace the Palestinian people. We express our commitment to their cause and call on all peoples to join together so that the search for true peace may continue. It is very hard to talk of a State in terms of equality when children are being killed and families burned. It is very difficult to talk of a State in terms of equality when jailers force-feed prisoners. It is very difficult to talk of equality of States and peace when there is territorial segregation in every sense of the term.

I know that the vote that took place today in the General Assembly came from the hearts and consciences of all present. There is concern as to whether the best will exists to move towards a true process of peace so that the Palestinian State can be recognized and enjoy full rights in the Organization. Let us move forward and reaffirm our support for the right to determination of that fraternal people, which has resisted military savagery and seen its rights trampled upon for decades.

Our afternoon today concludes as an afternoon of justice. We stand side by side with peoples and their quest for justice.

Mr. Timerman (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Argentine Republic and its people are the children of a struggle for liberation. The Argentine Republic recognizes the right to self-determination of peoples and the territorial integrity of States. The Argentine Republic believes that the only entity with the right to decide on the existence of a Palestinian State is the Palestinian people itself, which must not be pressured or to decide its own future or burdened with conditions. That is why the Argentine Republic recognizes the Palestinian State as a sovereign State.

We should have liked to vote today on the inclusion of the Palestinian State as a full member of the General Assembly. However, since the Organization still needs reforms, the Palestinian State cannot be a Member because its membership first has to be approved by a minority of countries in the Security Council. We therefore happily voted for the inclusion of the Palestinian flag among those of the other countries represented in front of this building.

Since the Holy See itself will be represented with its flag, allow me to reiterate a statement made by Pope Francis: Let us tear down walls and build bridges. Now is the time for us to do so with the Palestinian people. We give the Palestinian people the right to decide for itself on the creation of a Palestinian State. The Assembly gives it the right, without the Security Council's say-so, to be able to vote on the inclusion of the Palestinian State as a full Member.

Mr. Alhakim (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the Group of Arab States, I take the floor again to express sincere thanks and appreciation to all for their efforts and to all those who voted in favour of resolution 69/320, which reminds us that the whole world stands by people languishing under colonization. I congratulate the Government and the people of Palestine on the adoption of this resolution, which is symbolic. Within a legal framework, it represents a step towards the establishment of a Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, within the pre-1967 borders. The resolution, which is based on international law, is important for the following reasons.

The resolution is in line with resolution 67/19 of 2012, which accorded to Palestine non-member observer State status in the United Nations. Secondly, it falls within the framework of the right to raise a flag that has a cultural and symbolic value for the Palestinian people. Thirdly, it sends a message from the General Assembly that the Israeli occupation and the siege imposed on the Palestinian people are not welcome at the United Nations. The Charter of the United Nations affirms the right to self-determination of people languishing under occupation. The raising of the Palestinian flag is a testament to the serious commitment of the international community to the establishment of a contiguous, independent Palestinian State based on the pre-1967 borders.

Mr. Eler (Turkey): Today we took a symbolic yet important step in order to address the historical injustice against the Palestinian people. It can be considered as another milestone on the path towards Palestine's full membership of the United Nations. To that end, a historic decision was taken by this body when Palestine was accorded non-member observer status on 29 November 2012. On that day, Prime Minister Davutoğlu, who was then Foreign Minister of Turkey, came to New York and addressed the General Assembly to express our heartfelt support of Palestine. That day, in his speech, Prime Minister Davutoğlu said,

> "If we are to talk about an international order and place our trust in the United Nations system, then the Palestineian flag should fly beside this building ... That is our responsibility to

> the Palestinian people ... Our vision for justice, international order and human rights will not be achieved until we see the flag of the State of Palestine standing side by side with ours, as a full Member of the United Nations. And that day will come soon" (*A/67/PV.44, p. 10*).

Mr. Dehghani (Islamic Republic of Iran): The Islamic Republic of Iran welcomes the decision of the General Assembly to adopt resolution 69/320 on raising the flags of non-member observer States at the United Nations. The number of Member States that sponsored the resolution and the number of votes cast in its favour demonstrate the importance that the international community and world public opinion attach to the right of peoples to self-determination. We have fully supported the objective of the resolution and sponsored the text.

The non-member observer States participate in the sessions and work of the Organization as States. It is therefore quite logical to see their flags raised at the Headquarters and other offices of the United Nations. Since the State of Palestine also falls under the category of non-member observer States, we believe that the resolution acquires more importance and deserves special attention and support. By voting in favour of the resolution, we sent a message of solidarity with the Government and people of the State of Palestine. We earnestly hope that what the people of Palestine deserve — that is, to live free from occupation, acquire full independence and take their rightful place among members of the international community — will soon be realized.

Mr. Abbas (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): Today's vote in favour of raising the flag of Palestine as a non-member observer State at the United Nations is a great achievement. However, it is more important that the international community redouble its efforts to end the occupation of Palestine and assist the Palestinian people in achieving their independence in order to give Palestine full membership, on an equal footing with all the States members of the General Assembly.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall be very brief. Bolivia of course voted in favour of resolution 69/320. Although it is of a symbolic nature, symbols are very important. When the flag is raised in front of United Nations premises, it will be a permanent reminder of what the international community has done well and what it has so far failed to do for the Palestinian people. When we see the flag flying in front of those premises, we must remember the wall that is being built. When we see the flag flying in front of those premises, we must remember the forced displacement of thousands upon thousands of Palestinian men and women. When we see that flag, we must remember the usurpation of their land and territory. When we see that flag, we must remember the illegal settlements that have been built in Palestinian territory. When we see that flag, we must remember the Palestinian prisoners who are being held in Israeli cells. When we see that flag, we must remember those who have been wounded in the merciless attacks of the Israel Army on the Palestinian people. When we see that flag, we must of course remember those who have laid down their lives for the Palestinian cause, and above all, we must remember that the international community has not yet been able to give the Palestinian people what it needs: the definitive establishment of a Palestinian State.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the Permanent Observer of the observer State of the Holy See.

Archbishop Auza (Holy See): My delegation would like to make four points regarding resolution 69/320, which has just been adopted. First, the Holy See has always respected the 70-year practice and tradition of the United Nations, whereby only flags of Member States have flown at the United Nations Headquarters and offices. Secondly, the Holy See was not opposed to the introduction of the resolution, in accordance with the rules governing the General Assembly. Thirdly, with regard to the resolution itself, the Holy See respects and accepts what the General Assembly has just decided. Fourthly, my delegation reiterates the position of the Holy See on the two-State solution — Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the Permanent Observer of the observer State of Palestine.

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): On behalf of the State of Palestine, I am honoured to address the General Assembly, following its historic vote on the adoption of resolution 69/320 on raising the flags of non-member observer States at the United Nations — namely, the flags of the State of Palestine and the Holy See.

We are grateful to all the Member States that supported the resolution and convey the deepest appreciation of the Palestinian people and their

leadership for the honourable position they have taken on this most meaningful issue for our people. We also express special thanks to the sponsors of the resolution for their consummate support for this initiative, consistent with their abiding support for the just cause of Palestine. The votes in favour cast by member States today constitute a reaffirmation of the long-standing principled position of the international community in support of a just, lasting, comprehensive and peaceful solution to the question of Palestine, and in support of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including to self-determination and independence.

The General Assembly has today sent an important message to our people that cannot be underestimated, for it comes at a very critical time in their long journey towards freedom and dignity. The Palestinian people are in despair, as they continue to suffer under Israel's nearly half-century foreign occupation and as more than 5 million Palestine refugees in camps throughout the region continue to endure repeated tragedies, all awaiting the realization of their rights. Hopelessness is dramatically rising as Israel, the occupying Power, persists in the illegal colonization and siege of our land and the cruel subjugation of our people and, as the political process remains stalled and turmoil, conflict and extremism are spreading in our region, undermining faith in the rule of law, in the international system and in the prospects for peace.

Yet, even in the midst of these grim realities, we are proud to say that the will and spirit of the Palestinian people have not been broken. At this critical moment, as they have come to the international community once again peacefully appealing for support of the symbolic yet significant step to raise their national flag at the United Nations, we are grateful that this appeal has been so rightly fulfilled.

Today's vote is a reaffirmation of the legitimacy of the national aspirations of the Palestinian people, of their existence among the nations of the world and of their right to self-determination to be a free people in control of their lives and destiny in their own independent State. The General Assembly's adoption of this resolution will help to restore some hope to our people and leadership as they continue on the peaceful, non-violent, political and legal path that they have chosen and to which they remain committed to against all odds, so as to fulfil the rights of the Palestinian people, achieve a just and sustainable peace and secure Palestine's rightful place among the community of nations.

It is another step towards the fulfilment of the promise of independence made to the Palestinian people nearly seven decades ago, and repeatedly thereafter, which remains unfulfilled to the present day. It is another step towards redressing this historic injustice.

Today's vote is also a contribution to the international efforts to salvage the two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders and in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations and the Arab Peace Initiative — a solution that has been gravely damaged by the occupying Power but which we nevertheless continue to strive for so that we may see the day when the State of Palestine and the State of Israel live side by side in peace, coexistence and security, thereby ushering in the dawn of a new era in our region and in our global community.

Today, with the support of the Assembly for this peaceful and legitimate initiative, the international community has reaffirmed our people's faltering faith in the international community's commitment to their just cause and reaffirmed the centrality of the role of the United Nations in this respect.

In 1974, the Palestine Liberation Organization, recognized as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, received a standing invitation to participate in the work and sessions of the General Assembly as an observer. That was more than four decades ago. In 2012, the Assembly adopted its historic resolution 67/19, which grants non-member observer State status to Palestine. This resolution today is yet another significant step in affirming the international consensus in favour of Palestinian independence.

In this year of the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations, which has had the question of Palestine on its agenda since its inception, this step must be matched by concrete actions, without delay and consistent with the relevant resolutions and the standing political, legal and moral responsibilities to end the occupation and achieve the rights of the Palestinian people and a peaceful settlement, all long overdue. The international community must rise to the urgency of this matter to advance peace in a region where all trends are tragically to the contrary. The Security Council in particular must uphold its Charter duties and cannot remain paralysed, failing the cause of peace.

As we continue to exert all efforts towards that objective, we look forward with great anticipation to the day when the Palestinian flag will be raised at

the United Nations — a moment that will surely be emotional and full of pride and unity for the Palestinian people. Of course, we know that raising our flag will neither end the occupation nor solve the conflict. We also know that our application for admission to membership to the United Nations remains pending before the Security Council and that much hard work remains to be done. But raising the flag will signal to our people everywhere, who are watching us tonight, that their freedom is inevitable and that the international community supports them in their journey towards justice, for their rights and for the independence of their State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Allow me to say a few words in Arabic to our people who are watching us tonight in Palestine and in the Middle East.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

We, the Palestinian people, await the day when the flag of Palestine will be raised at United Nations Headquarters at the end of the month and in the presence of President Mahmoud Abbas. We hope that on that day the flag will also be raised in Palestinian homes, schools, shops, farms, universities and institutions everywhere else appropriate so that we can thereby assert our commitment to putting an end to the Israeli occupation of our territory since 1969, to establishing an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital through the achievement of the two-State solution on the basis of international consensus. That will be a historic and eternal day in our struggle to have our legitimate national rights and aspirations prevail. The flag will fly with the flags of all other nations at United Nations Headquarters.

Let all of us work together so that that day will be one of dignity for our people, for our martyrs, for our prisoners, for the besieged city of Gaza and for our beloved country, Palestine. I send a greeting to the people of Palestine from here at the General Assembly.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker on this agenda item.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 120?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 6.30 p.m.